

SUPPORT TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS

BY

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USAWC CIVILIAN RESEARCH PROJECT

SUPPORT TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS

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This paper is written as a requirement to fulfill the author's Army War College Fellowship at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC.

During the research phase of this project multiple personnel, both military and civilian, provided information and shared their thoughts on the difficult tasks of logistics support to SOF operations. Their experiences and vision provided well thought out and realistic recommendations for joint educational and training reform and the growth of joint logistics structure for support to SOF. All personnel are documented in the end notes and bibliography.

ABSTRACT

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Today's Special Operations Forces are the best trained, educated and equipped Soldiers in the world. The technological advances provided for their operations are unmatched. Since 911 the mission and deployment of Special Operations has doubled in frequency and location. To meet these demands the assessment and size of all Special Operations is growing to meet their global commitment. The growth of operators has out-distanced the Special Operations support structure by over 75 percent. The DOD assignment and tracking process has failed to monitor, grow and develop the support personnel necessary to keep pace with Special Operations. Logistics Soldiers are assigned with limited training and usually for one tour of duty creating a lack of continuity and consistency of support provided. To eliminate the discovery learning and relearning for support to Special Operations a program must be developed which provides a career path to track, educate, train and assign support Soldiers to Special Operations in a structured format. Working with Special Operations Command, subordinate units, DOD and HRC a program of assignment and career management must be developed to keep pace with the future and growth of Special Operations.

SUPPORT TO SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Special Operations Forces or Unconventional Forces have been conducting operations as long as mankind has been fighting wars. Outside the box thinkers with innovative and unique ideas to deceive and defeat; men of action using creative and forward thinking methods to cripple their enemy's abilities in support of winning wars. The first unconventional forces recognized within the United States were "Rogers' RANGERS", a group of men fighting during the French and Indian Wars using unconventional tactics in the woods and swamps to surprise and kill the enemy with stealth, remaining hidden within the thick and harsh terrain. A different tactic from fighting in open fields and easily navigated terrain where you were in plain view of your enemy. Francis Marion used guerilla raids during the American Revolution and Colonel John Mosby, "The Gray Ghost" harassed and confused Union leaders during the Civil War. In WWII the use and recognition of Special Forces became more formalized and units were formed with the specific purpose to conduct special operations and missions as an instrument within the larger strategic plan. These WWII units were formed as part of the 1st Special Service Force.

"These special operations units of the second World War were known as the Army's elite. Their philosophy was simple: shock the enemy with quick strikes and deep thrusts, leaving him paralyzed and confused. It was the 20th-century application of principles first formulated by Rogers' Rangers, and it became the basis of the modern-day Ranger force."¹

In 1941 President Roosevelt directed the formation of an agency titled Coordinator of Intelligence, later known as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OSS took the level of unconventional operations to a new height, using small teams to parachute

behind enemy lines where they would train teams of resistance forces to wage operations from within the warring country. President Truman disbanded the OSS but its legacy and structure evolved to later create the Central Intelligence Agency. The Air Force Special Operations origins began during WWII; in 1952 a new unconventional organization, Special Forces, commonly referred to as green berets was formed; in 1962 President Kennedy authorized the formation of the Navy Seals, an elite unit with the mission to conduct unconventional Maritime operations; and the Marines special operations, Force Reconnaissance, were formally initiated in June of 1957. As history shows the need for special operations forces has steadily increased and in every conflict they have played a key role in defense of our Nation.

TODAY'S SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) was approved by President Ronald Reagan on 13 April, 1987. The Major Force Program-11, MFP-11 is a key component put into place when USSOCOM was established. MFP-11 gave USSOCOM a "SOF checkbook" which provides them the unique ability to manage and conduct acquisition of SOF-Peculiar items for the force. The use of special operations has changed over the years but their role/mission has remained essentially the same. The USSOCOM mission statement today is to "Provide fully capable Special Operations Forces to defend the United States and its interests and to synchronize the planning of global operations against terrorist networks."² The four components and their subordinate units aligned under USSOCOM to conduct these operations are the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSOC), Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) and the

Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC). Over the past 10 years USSOCOM has grown in size for both personnel and equipment and significantly increased their scope of operations and numbers of deployments. On any given day approximately 12,000 Special Operations Forces (SOF) and enabling personnel are deployed to over 75 countries.³ It has been said by many senior leaders that today's environment demands the skills of SOF more than ever. These forces are the best trained, equipped, and technological advanced Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines in the world. However, the growth of the operational force is disproportional to the growth of SOF enabler personnel. If the resources are being provided to ensure that the operators remain the best trained and equipped force then shouldn't the personnel supporting them be provided the same level of effort? In the early days of special operations from Rogers' Rangers up to early WWII the individual Soldiers were able to take care of their own equipment and live mainly off of the land; the requirement for additional support personnel was limited. Since WWII the distances traveled, quantity of equipment coupled with the cutting edge technology provided to SOF the requirement for trained and qualified support personnel has tripled. SOF personnel can still operate in austere environments with limited support but the logistics tail to ensure success for this is long and complicated; a network of military, DoD civilians, contractors, interagency, private sector, voluntary agencies and host nation support ensuring sustainment to the force. From the tip of the spear to the manufacturer logisticians use multiple standard and non-standard methods of supply and delivery to accomplish the mission. SOCOM has identified that "the SOF Truths are an integral part of Special Operations Forces (SOF) heritage, and they provide time tested guidance for the SOF

community.” These truths include: 1. Humans are more important than hardware, 2. Quality is more important than quantity, 3. Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced, 4. Competent Special Operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies occur, and the fifth truth which had been omitted from the original five SOF truths for many years was added back by Admiral Olson based on the support provided by non-SOF, 5. Most SOF operations require non-SOF assistance.⁴ This fifth truth inherently identifies the reliance on the services and other agencies to support SOF operations and is not just limited to logistics. The need for education and training to support SOF applies equally to the other “non-operator” skills and services necessary to ensure the ability to execute operations as well as to conduct training and to provide the daily service functions. In order to increase the ability of SOF enablers to improve and enhance support for SOF operations a significant change in the structure, assignment process and educational development must be addressed and evaluated for change.

SOF LOGISTICIANS; HOW THEY DIFFER FROM A CONVENTIONAL LOGISTICIAN

By their very nature almost all SOF operations are Joint and require precision coordination between the forces involved to ensure mission success. The focus for coordination and execution directed at the operator level is precise and detailed. The coordination for logistics support and the enabler forces does not always get that same level of emphasis and precision. This is not due to a lack of effort but is created by the lack of formal training and education as well as limited numbers of personnel. Logistics support to USSOCOM is conducted predominantly by the Military Services. Although, this works great in concept it does not always provide the optimal, most cost efficient or rapid level of support necessary on the ground. The Services are focused on their areas

of responsibility and the support to SOF is not always articulated as a high priority to the conventional forces at the tactical level and even when articulated the experience and understanding of what and how to provide support is limited and dependent upon individual experience. The requirements placed on a SOF logistician are extensively more complicated than those of conventional logisticians across all Services. A SOF logistician must accomplish the same level of support required for conventional support personnel with the addition of clandestine operations and support to indigenous irregular forces.⁵ The following areas and specialties are also unique to SOF: supply authorities for joint and combined forces training; accountability for two to three property books for both white and restricted SOF as well as SOF-Peculiar (SOF-P) weapons and equipment, commercial off the shelf items (COTS) and foreign weapons and equipment; funding and accountability authorities for foreign, restricted, and host nation ammunition; support to coalition SOF; funding streams for Title 10, Title 50, MFP-11(SOF) and MFP-2(conventional); and purchasing methods through multiple contracting agencies, operational funds (cash), Government Purchase Card (GPC) with increased dollar limits, special pay and allowances and unique items purchasing.⁶ These additional requirements and the skill set to accomplish them are not taught in a formal setting at any current logistics course. Most basic and advanced courses gloss over, if discussed at all, the requirements and difficulties of SOF logistics; OJT is the currently accepted practice.

STRUCTURE AND SHORTFALLS

The vulnerability of the SOF logistics structure has been a serious topic of discussion amongst senior and lower level logisticians for several years. Many have

addressed concerns that SOF logistics is ten years behind the Army and the eventual lack of structure will result in serious consequences. As the SOF community continues to grow the associated risks with logistics support are compounded. Currently the main source of logistics support to SOF is handled by the organic Service logistics capability augmented through the use of a Joint Manning Document (JMD). An individual tasked to fill a JMD is normally assigned for six months and does not always come with the necessary SOF experience and skill set. This limited assignment time and lack of experience creates a significant learning curve for the assigned individuals and an even longer learning curve for the organization as a whole. One measure necessary to address this issue is through a change in the force design. Even though the subordinate USSOCOM special operations commands have continued to increase their operations globally while simultaneously growing their SOF operator population they have still grown limited enabler capability. In 2005 USASOC approved the ARSOF Logistics Transformation Concept which added five Group Support Battalions, three Ranger Battalion Support Companies and the 528th Special Operations Sustainment Brigade. The initial growth and majority of the distribution of these forces was accomplished by dividing the sections and personnel within the organic structure of the 528th Special Operations Support Battalion and assigning them to these new units across the command. The logistics growth remained at zero percent over the next five years while the operator growth grew by over 40%. This disproportional growth across the command created multiple short falls and placed a higher demand on the Army and the JMD process. Logistics and other low density MOS personnel were deploying at a higher rate than other forces within the command. The United States Army Special

Forces Command (USASFC (A)) recognized this capability shortfall and in an unprecedented realignment proposed the reduced growth of green berets in order to grow CS and CSS capability within the Special Forces Groups.⁷ The Navy also initiated change and has begun to restructure their SOF logistics support. “Naval Special Warfare historically operated as part of the fleet from where much of its CSS needs were met. NSW is now deployed in an expeditionary posture, separate from the fleet fixed shore installations, driving the need to properly define, resource, and implement an appropriate CSS and expeditionary logistics paradigm.”⁸ To meet this new challenge the Navy established two Joint Logistics Unit (LOGSU) to support the SEALs. The LOGSUs were established under the Naval Special Warfare - 21 initiative “to ensure maximum logistics support and enable NSW to remain a viable, relevant force for many decades to come. The LOGSU is tasked to plan, integrate, synchronize, and provide logistics support for its respective Naval Special Warfare Group and its subordinate units and SEAL teams in order to directly support NSW operations and training during times of peace, crisis, and war.”⁹ The Marines have established two organizations to support logistics and training, the Marine Special Operations Support Group and the Marine Special Operations School. “The MSOSG provides combat support and combat service support to MARSOC units, to include: logistics, communication and intelligence.”¹⁰ The Air Force uses a logistics officer to coordinate support, “Once deployed, the AFSOC logistics officer will coordinate and manage logistic support, vehicle requirements, POL, billeting, messing, and establish connectivity with the Theater and CONUS logistic support systems.”¹¹ This type of restructuring must be recognized and continue to be implemented across the DoD and the SOF community. The 2011 National Military Strategy focuses heavily on the requirement for joint capabilities and joint forces to include increasing enabler

support to special operations forces.¹² Although, not specifically mentioned a true joint logistics organization designed to support SOF operations is an outside the box option to provide a more focused, tailored and robust structure for SOF logistics. The lack of SOFLOG structure is being addressed by senior staff and commanders at levels to include concepts of support and capability gaps in support of SOF. It has also been identified at USSOCOM in the FY12-17 IPL, “Enablers to Enhance SOF Effects”.¹³ The need for joint logistics capability and more specifically individually well trained and versed officers and NCOs who know and understand the joint environment and its unique requirements must be developed. Although not specifically aimed at SOF this joint need, and as stated earlier all SOF operations are joint, was identified in the July 2008 Joint Publication 4-0, Joint Logistics.

“The Nation’s ability to project and sustain military power depends on effective joint logistics. Joint logistics delivers sustained logistics readiness for the combatant commander (CCDR) and subordinate joint force commanders (JFCs) through the integration of national, multinational, Service, and combat support agency (CSA) capabilities. The integration of these capabilities ensures forces are physically available and properly equipped, at the right place and time, to support the joint force.”¹⁴

Although each service is providing and growing their SOF logistics capability, it still does not meet the requirement for an individual joint logistician. Each SOC logistician will still only understand their specific and unique service systems and capabilities. A true joint SOF logistician will be “*multi-functional*” at joint operations. They will have the ability to understand and communicate the resources and capabilities needed to sustain the joint SOF Force not just their specific service SOC.

ASSIGNMENT PROCESS AND IMPACTS

The assignment process for manning the JMD and for SOF logisticians must be addressed by each service in-conjunction with input from USSOCOM. Major James Bogart wrote a thesis which proposed the use of an Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) for Army SOF logisticians. His final recommendation identified that it was in the best interest of ARSOF to require the ASI in order to better track and train SOF logisticians within the Army.¹⁵ I agree with his findings but believe it should go a step further and be an ASI at the Joint /DOD level for all services. At the service level a Joint SOF logistics career field or designator is necessary to identify a SOFLOG assignment/career path which provides a SOF logistician the ability to combine joint, SOF and conventional assignments, education and training that best meets the individual's need for promotion and career advancement while simultaneously providing the best and brightest SOF logistician in support of SOF operations, many commanders today refer to this as talent management. This process must be deliberate and interactive with the commanders within the SOF community and be provided earlier in the career timeline. An assignment to a SOF logistics unit does not automatically qualify an individual as a SOF logistician, as stated previously talent management must identify and maintain the best and brightest for a career within the SOF community. Assignments to SOF must be calculated and planned throughout the Soldiers, NCOs and officers career. Currently a Soldier can be assigned to SOF at any point in their career. The assignment can last from two to four years. The difficult part and the reason for many shortfalls is the lack of a repeat assignment once a Soldier leaves SOF. Most Soldiers get one assignment and

never return, preventing the knowledge based and experience to continue to grow and develop the unit as a whole. The days of the onetime SOF assignment must be eliminated. In the past an assignment to a SOF position for anyone other than an operator was not considered a positive career move. It will take several more years of SOF exposure to eliminate this attitude and culture across DoD. The ability to supply and maintain forces spread across diverse geographical locations, most without any established infrastructure, and the capability to maintain SOF-P equipment, advanced/technically sophisticated weapons, night vision, surveillance equipment and vehicles must be planned and coordinated by a dedicated and prepared SOF logistician. A onetime assignment within SOF does not develop an individual to understand the unique and special requirements necessary to sustain SOF. This individual must be grown throughout a career with proper assignment and education.¹⁶

EDUCATION AND GROWING SOF LEADERS

At this time there is no formal education system available to train a SOF logistician. "This lack of education has lead to individuals developing work arounds, parallel processes, and, in some cases, unintended breach of law or regulation".¹⁷ A formal education system has been discussed informally throughout the SOF logistics community for many years but with limited success. The increased use of SOF over the last ten years of war has highlighted the education shortfall and started to see some initiative at the higher levels. USSOCOM is working with DoD and the Services to influence management of assigned manpower and to build creative, adaptive and flexible leaders at all levels.¹⁸ LTG Mulholland, Commander, USASOC recognizes this educational requirement for ARSOF Soldiers and addressed it in his 2010 ARSOF

Capstone Document, "We need to improve education and training to span one's entire career in ARSOF, from the tactical to the operational and strategic level".¹⁹ SOF logistics education at any formal schooling is limited and quickly written off as on the job training should you receive an assignment to a SOF unit. USSOCOM currently has a Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) which provides education for intelligence, medical and legal personnel. This JSOU concept could be expanded to include logistics. However, in order for this to work it will take an innovative approach to our current education system and handling of talent management across the services. If JSOU was identified as a viable option, SOF identified logisticians could attend JSOU in lieu of conventional schooling and courses. The option to fill a one year SOF JMD should also be considered as educational credit for SOF enablers, as discussed as part of the talent management pools for a career SOF logistician. The down side to this is the additional requirements to conduct the training and the change of conventional thinking for our current regiment of allocated educational and career enhancing courses.

CONCLUSION

The way ahead for a true joint capable SOF logistician is the establishment of some form of joint logistics university or a joint education module incorporated into the existing system where all DoD logisticians, private sector, interagency personnel, international organizations, NGOs and foreign SOF come together for formalized training. The solution is not easy and can be identified by four phases. We have been in Phase I and II for several years, Phase I – identifying the need and Phase II – discussion and solution development. Phases III is to agree on and finalize the way ahead and the most difficult stage is Phase IV – implementation. The Institute for Defense & Business

developed a J4 Logistics Seminar concept of operations to discuss Joint Logistics; part of their conclusion for the concept of operations included the following statement.

“At the strategic level, our nation’s leaders in the public and private sectors recognize the need to collaborate more effectively across organizational cultures. At the tactical level, our on-the-ground personnel strive to find ways to overcome logistical difficulties and problems – sometimes inefficiently, sometimes bending the rules – but getting the job done. Our greatest weakness is at the operational level, where joint, combined, interagency, and private/voluntary sector cooperation should be forged in advance. The opportunities are few and far between, however, to discuss the obstacles to and find ways to improve that collaboration effectively across organizations.” ²⁰

The number of operations for the United States Special Operations Command has continued to increase since 9-11 and based on current intelligence and planning will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. As SOF operations continue to increase the need for a more formal SOF logistics structure, assignment process and education reform must be embraced at all levels. The Army is willing to make radical changes for the Profession of Arms²¹; the Joint community, USSOCOM and more specifically all SOF enablers must be prepared to do the same in order to successfully meet the global commitment of SOF operations in today’s complex and unstable environments. This is not a quick fix issue and will take several years of planning, coordination and implementation. The problem is real and must receive immediate attention for continued success in SOF logistics.

END NOTES

¹ U.S. Army Special Forces, *THE GREEN BERETS*, Special Forces History and Origins. Special Operations.Com, http://www.specialoperations.com/Army/Special_Forces/SF_Info/Detailed_History.htm

² United States Special Operations Command, <http://www.socom.mil/SOCOMHome/Pages/default.aspx>, 24 April 2011. "Provide fully capable Special Operations Forces to defend the United States and its interests and to synchronize the planning of global operations against terrorist networks.

³ Admiral T. Olson, United States Special Operations Command, 2010 Posture Statement, 2. On an average day, in excess of 12,000 Special Operations Forces (SOF) and SOF support personnel are deployed in more than 75 countries across the globe. An invaluable ingredient is our reserve element, about 14 percent of SOF's total manpower. Currently, 86 percent of deployed SOF are in U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM)'s area of responsibility under the operational control of General Petraeus. The rest of the deployed force – along with over 3,000 members permanently stationed in Europe and the Pacific – are serving the other Geographic Combatant Commanders.

⁴ SOF COAST, Sean Naylor, Adm Olson adds "lost" 5th truth to doctrine, August 2009. <http://www.sofcoast.com/weblog/2009/09/adm-olsen-adds-lost-5th-sof-truth-to-doctrine.html>, Admiral T. Olson United States Special Operations Command, April 2011.

⁵ ARSOF Unconventional Warfare Logistics Requirements Project Description #10-946.2, Rand Study, USASOC, July 2010.

⁶ Major Derek K. Jansen, email request for establishment of a SOF Logistics Course at USSOCOM, 17 August 2009. Major Jansen has served multiple tours in SOF and has worked to create SOF logistics training and doctrine.

⁷ United States Army Special Forces Command (Airborne), Band V Force Design Update, Operational and Organizational Concept paper for USASFC (A) Changes to the SF Group (A) 28 July 2009.

⁸ CDR Kevin Jones, Navy Supply Corps Newsletter, Logistics Support Units: The Jawbone of Naval Special Warfare, January/February 2010, <https://www.navsup.navy.mil/scnewsletter/2010/jan-feb/cover2>.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ U.S. Marines Corps Forces Special Operations Command, <http://www.marines.mil/unit/marsoc/Pages/about/About-MARSOC.aspx>

¹¹ US AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES, AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND (AFSOC) Chapter 5, http://www.fas.org/irp/agency/dod/socom/sof-ref-2-1/SOFREF_Ch5.htm, AFSOF logistics support is focused on keeping the aircraft flying, just as in the conventional Air Force. Logistics and maintenance emphasis is placed on the cycle of launch, recovery, service, rapid repair, and re-launch. The cycle may be compressed into relatively short time periods, 12 hours or less. This places a significant burden on the support infrastructure, given the level of sophistication of the avionics and the requirement to operate from austere locations.

The parent wing, group and/or squadron are responsible for determining equipment, spares, and personnel requirements. This determination will be based on the length of the deployment and amount of logistic support available at the deployed location. Once deployed, the AFSOC logistics officer will coordinate and manage logistic support, vehicle requirements, POL, billeting, messing, and establish connectivity with the Theater and CONUS logistic support systems.

If time permits prior to deployment, the wing or group logistic planning cell will develop a plan to support deployed flying operations and concomitant logistics objectives. Short term employment will normally be

supported by drawing from readiness spares packages. Longer term employments will be supported by established supply lines.

¹² Admiral M.G. Mullen, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, The National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 2011 Redefining America's Military Leadership.

¹³ ARSOF Logistics Update, Power Point Presentation Presented to FORSCOM G4, MG Mason by COL Pallatto, USASOC G4 and COL Kness, 528th Special Operations Sustainment Brigade CDR, 3 November 2010.

¹⁴ Joint Publication 4-0, Joint Logistics July 2008.

¹⁵ Major James Bogart, Master's thesis, "Creation of additional skill identifier for Special Operations Forces logistics personnel", Fort Leavenworth, KS, June 2006. "Within the Contemporary Operating Environment (COE) Special Operations Forces (SOF) have become a integral component to the overall strategy of the United States Armed Forces. The impacts by SOF are felt both internally and externally as their participation in operations expand and visibility increases. As this participation increases so does the effects on their logistics capabilities to maintain operational tempo become evident that there is a shortfall. Correcting this shortfall, SOF has transformed their logistics by creating new support organizations to execute sustainment operations. Establishing new organizations require personnel to man them which in line creates a problem of who will fill those positions. Here in lies the central research question: Will the creation of an Additional Skill Identifier (ASI) solve the current SOF logistics personnel problems and provide qualified logistics officers to serve the force? Using research

on the creation of the Special Forces branch and Functional Area 90, Multifunctional Logistician, combined with interviews of former and present commanders of SOF provided insight into the acceptance of a SOF logistician ASI."

¹⁶ LTG John F. Mulholland Jr., ARSOF Capstone Concept 2010, 9 December 2009.

¹⁷ Major Derek K. Jansen, email request for establishment of a SOF Logistics Course at USSOCOM, 17 August 2009.

¹⁸ Admiral T. Olson, United States Special Operations Command, 2010 Posture Statement, 13.

¹⁹ LTG John F. Mulholland Jr., ARSOF Capstone Concept 2010, 9 December 2009, 11.

²⁰ Ronnie Mann, Institute for Defense & Business, Joint Staff J4 Logistics Seminar, CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS Contract #: W91QUZ-08-D-0016.

²¹ General Martin E. Dempsey. Army: Profession of Arms, Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE), October 2010, pg. 7-9.

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- LTC Miles Townsend, SOCOM, J4 SOAL Planner, August 2009 - June 2010
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